PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

JOHN PITTS

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FOREWORD.

THE title of this little book implies certain limitations in the selection and treatment of topics, and the reader is asked to bear this fact in mind. It is not "The Psychology of Religion," since such a description might easily lead the reader to expect a more comprehensive survey of the psychological aspects of the religious consciousness and of religious experience than could possibly be attempted in the space at our disposal. By calling this book *Psychology and Religion* there is a suggestion of incompleteness of treatment and discussion which the book itself carries out. Certain topics are omitted which could not be justifiably excluded from a more pretentious work on *The Psychology of Religion.*

Moreover, this book is not intended to set forth "The Psychology of Christian Experience," though it does not entirely neglect certain aspects of this very important and far-reaching subject. For example, in several chapters references are made, from the Christian point of view, to the psychological phenomena that are summed up in the word "Conversion," but only one or two aspects of this very wide topic are dealt

with. Again, only a passing reference is made to the psychological attack on religion (a final chapter on this would have been added had space allowed) which is such an important question from the standpoint of Christian truth.

Again, it should be remembered that this is a book on Psychology, not on Theology, though the treatment of some topics comes within sight of theological issues. It is hoped, however, that the discussion—at various points—indicates clearly the writer's wholehearted belief in the objective reality of the Christian experience of the truth and grace of God in Jesus Christ. After all, Psychology may *explain* the mental laws to which religious experiences conform, but it does not *create* those experiences; it may set forth the psychological aspects of religion, but it can pronounce no judgment on the question of the ultimate truth of religion. And while the psychological approach to religion has its value, it has also its limitations, of which "Woodbine Willie" (Rev. G. A. Studdert-Kennedy) has reminded us in his inimitable manner in his little poem called "The Psychologist."

He takes the saint to pieces,
And labels all the parts;
He tabulates the secrets
Of loyal, loving hearts.

He probes their selfish passion,
And shows exactly why
The martyr goes out singing
To suffer and to die.

The Beatific Vision
That brings them to their knees,
He smilingly reduces,
To infant phantasies.

The Freudian Unconscious
Quite easily explains
The splendour of their sorrows,
The pageant of their pains.

The manifold temptations,
Wherewith the flesh can vex
The saintly soul, are samples
Of Œdipus complex.

The subtle sex perversion,
His eagle glance can tell,
That makes their joyous heaven
The horror of their hell.

His reasoning is perfect,
His proofs as plain as paint;
He has but one small weakness—
He cannot make a Saint.

Psychology and Religion

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY?

It cannot be denied that what is known as Psychology is one of the most discussed subjects of the day. No one who reads the daily newspapers and the popular magazines with an observant mind can fail to notice how often the word is used by modern writers or how much is being said about the subject in its various aspects. In no subject is an author so sure of readers or a lecturer of an audience. Indeed, there are some to whom this thing called " psychology " has become a kind of obsession, whether they know anything about it or not. In the press, on the platform, and even from the pulpit, the word is constantly being used, and Prof. J. J. Findlay, of Manchester University, is not far wrong when he says that the present century will come to be known as " the age of psychology," just as the previous century came to be called " the age of biology." It is true that as a science Psychology is only in its infancy as yet, and a good deal more

investigation will have to be undertaken before this department of study will be able fully to justify its existence. Nevertheless, much progress has already been made in the understanding of psychological problems, and a good deal of light has been thrown upon what were hitherto obscure questions of human character and conduct. At the present time numerous practical applications of psychological discoveries are being made in industry, in medicine, and especially in education. In America, for example, the expert psychologist has an official position in Children's Courts, and deals, in an advisory capacity, with all cases of juvenile delinquency which come before the magistrates. And in our own country "The Institute of Industrial Psychology" foreshadows a time when the properly qualified psychologist will have a recognised place, not only in the realms of education and law, but also in the larger spheres of industry and commerce.

But the question may be asked: What is Psychology? With what problems is it concerned, and how does it endeavour to deal with them? We know that Botany is the science which deals with every form of plant and vegetable life, that Geology studies the formation and nature of the crust of the earth, that Mathematics is concerned with

the properties of numbers, but of what is Psychology the science? It is a question to which many answers have been given. Someone has waggishly suggested that Psychology is the science which tells us what we all know in language which none of us can understand. There is an element of truth in that assertion. Up to a point we are all psychologists—some more so than others. We try to explain to a friend just how we felt on a certain great occasion in our experience, say, when we were "converted," or when we "passed through the waters of Baptism." We notice a child crying, and we remark: "Perhaps he has a pain somewhere." Or we point out when our dog wags his tail that the animal is pleased with himself, or with life generally. And in every instance we are trying to understand and explain a "state of mind"; we are attempting to say something about the mental processes which express themselves in actions. And this is what the psychologist attempts to do, though of course he tries to carry out the task in a far more systematic and scientific way than is possible to ordinary individuals.

We may therefore define Psychology as the science of Behaviour, provided we remember that in Psychology we study behaviour, not for its own sake, but for the

sake of the light which it throws upon mental processes. Or we may go back to the older definition and speak of Psychology as the science of the Mind, so long as we do not forget that what we call "mind" expresses itself in conduct or behaviour and that we can learn a good deal about this "mind" by observing the way in which men and animals act. It is not suggested of course that either of these two definitions is perfect. Indeed, to define Psychology in a manner that will commend itself to every school of psychological thought (and there are many such schools) seems to be impossible, and no one has succeeded in framing a definition capable of commanding universal assent. Nevertheless, we shall not go far wrong if we keep to either of the definitions given above, for however much psychologists may disagree as to the exact scope and subject-matter of their branch of study, it is admitted on almost every hand that the aim of the science is to understand the mental processes which express themselves in the activities of life. As a matter of fact, psychologists are in a broad way pretty certain as to the kind of problems which it is their business to consider. They know quite well that it is their task to study the various aspects of the mental life of men and animals. Where they part company from one another, and

split up into different schools of thought, is when they come to sum up their problems in general terms. Thus one school will speak of Psychology as the "science of Consciousness"; another will regard it as the "science of Mind"; yet another will describe it as the "science of Behaviour"; and much of the disagreement of these various schools arises from the difficulty of stating exactly what the terms "consciousness," "mind," and "behaviour" really mean.

There is, however, one definition of Psychology which is no longer accepted, but which deserves some mention because of its historical importance and also because of its relation to traditional Christian doctrine. It is the definition that is preserved in the word "psychology" itself. "Psychology" comes from two Greek words which together mean the "science of the soul," and the term was first used during "the golden age of Greek philosophy" (the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.) as a convenient designation for the study of man's mental life as a special department of science and philosophy. And for centuries—especially after the rise of Christianity—right down to the beginning of the modern era, Psychology was regarded in this light. Man was looked upon as an immortal soul which in this life is joined to

a body and which will survive the dissolution of the body. And Psychology was the science which studied this immortal soul. Modern psychologists no longer accept this definition of their science. They have no use for the " soul-hypothesis " as formulated by the theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages. Most of them do not even discuss, in the time-honoured and traditional manner, the all-important question whether or not man possesses a soul. They assert—and rightly so—that their science is concerned with facts that can be known, and that therefore there is no need for them to define their science by reference to a theological theory the truth or falsity of which it is not their business, as psychologists, to consider.

It must not, however, be thought on this account that modern psychologists necessarily deny the existence of the " soul." Or to put it in a more modern way, it must not be thought that psychologists necessarily champion a *materialistic* conception of human nature, although during the last century some of them certainly seem to have done so. Though they do not speak about the " soul " in the old-fashioned way, modern psychologists do discuss the relationship between body and mind, and many of them have come to conclusions with

reference to this problem of body-mind relationship that are quite in harmony with the Christian doctrine of human personality. Not every psychologist is prepared to accept the doctrine of materialism, *i.e.*, the view that man is no more than a delicately constructed piece of machinery, that life is simply matter accidently become conscious of itself, that what we call mind is no more than a mere phosphorescent glow generated by the working of the machinery of the nervous system and which disappears when the nervous systems dissolves at death. Indeed, one modern authority (Prof. A. E. Taylor) has gone so far as to say that the theory of psychological materialism is the theory "which finds *least* support among psychologists who really know the facts"; and he adds: "*No* scientific psychologist whatever is a materialist." This latter statement, it is true, may strike some as an exaggeration. They may think that they can point out psychologists who *are* materialists; and they may be right. Nevertheless, it does seem that on the whole modern Psychology is moving distinctly away from the materialistic conception of life and nature that was so prominent and influential during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In support of this contention, we may instance the fact that one whom many

competent judges regard as our greatest living thinker, viz., the French philosopher, Prof. Henri Bergson, strenuously advocates the spiritualistic conception of human personality. Drawing a good deal of his evidence from the more recent discoveries of psychology, he argues for the existence of the mind or soul as an entity independent of the body, urging that the function of the body is solely to be the instrument through which the mind can express itself in the world of sensible fact. He even goes so far as to assert that "mind overflows the brain," and that there is much that goes on in the mind for which we can find no explanation in the mere *physical* constitution of human nature. Certainly he rejects, with significant emphasis, the idea that mind or consciousness has no more reality than that of "a streak of light following the movement of a match rubbed along a wall in the dark."

Then again, we have our greatest psychologist, viz., Prof. William McDougall, championing what in its essence is the same view. In his great work *Body and Mind,* he maintains that body and soul are distinct entities, and that the soul can exist independently of the body when the latter has been dissolved at death. Indeed, he makes the striking declaration that without

this belief in the reality of the soul it is inconceivable that " whole nations could rise to the level of an austere morality, or even maintain a decent standard of conduct." Moreover, he urges that it is very desirable that modern Psychology should attempt to furnish, if possible, scientific support for the belief in the reality and the immortality of the soul.

We may also refer to the testimony of one of the chief American exponents of Religious Psychology, viz., Prof. J. B. Pratt. In his book, *Matter and Spirit* (published only a few years ago) Prof. Pratt champions a theory of the body-mind relationship known as " Psychological Interactionism," *i.e.*, the view which maintains that body and mind are two independent entities which, as we know them in this life, interact upon one another. This theory, so he asserts, is the one which raises fewer difficulties than any other theory; and he concludes his discussion—in the course of which he brings forward many arguments in support of the reality of spirit—by saying " that the mind being different in nature from the body and subject to different laws, there is no good reason to suppose that the death of the body is relevant to the life of the mind."

The foregoing considerations do not, of course, prove absolutely and beyond a

shadow of doubt that the spiritualistic conception of human nature is the true one. (It should be pointed out here that what we mean by "the spiritualistic conception of human nature" is not Spiritualism—which ought to be called Spiritism—but the view that man is a spiritual being, *i.e.,* that he possesses, or, rather, *is,* a soul). Nevertheless, it is a very significant fact that some of our greatest authorities—men whose thinking is not in the least degree swayed by theological bias—have definitely set their faces against the barren and dogmatic materialism that was at one time so prevalent. Indeed, it seems as if that high conception of the nature of man which finds its finest statement and expression in Christianity is once more beginning to assert itself and that there is a marked tendency in modern thought to rehabilitate all that is really essential and central to the traditional view of the soul. There appears to be ample justification for the paradoxical saying of Earl Balfour: "We know far too much nowadays about matter for any one of us to be a materialist." Certainly, modern Psychology—though it regards the formula, "the science of the Soul," as inadequate for the purpose of defining its scope and subject matter—has not yet revealed to us sufficient grounds for surrendering that high view of

the nature of human personality which we find set forth in the Bible.

There is one other definition of Psychology which calls for brief discussion, if only because such discussion will serve to introduce us to one of the most remarkable developments of modern Psychology—to what is known as the "New Psychology." It was pointed out on a previous page that Psychology has sometimes been defined as the "science of Consciousness." At one time, indeed, this seems to have been the favourite way of stating the scope of the study. Nowadays, however, there is a marked tendency to reject this definition as inadequate. This is not because we do not know what "consciousness" is. Every one of us knows what it is in a general way, even though we may find it impossible to define it adequately or to describe it with any exactness. We have a *direct* knowledge of it; it is none other than our *immediate* experience. As Prof. G. T. Ladd puts it: "Whatever we are when we are awake, as contrasted with what we are when we fall into a profound and dreamless sleep—that it is to be conscious." Now it cannot be denied that the science of Psychology is concerned with the investigation, analysis and classification of "states of consciousness." Even though it regards it as part of its task to

observe the *behaviour* of men and animals, it does so only that it may reach a fuller understanding of the " mental states " which are expressed and revealed in the behaviour. It is true that a certain American school of Psychology, known as the " Behaviourist School," attempts to confine itself simply to the observation and interpretation of the ways in which men and animals act, and endeavours to exclude all reference to consciousness, but it is generally regarded as advocating a very extreme view which reduces Psychology to merely an aspect of Physiology, *i.e.,* the science which studies the structure, the vital conditions and the organic functions of living beings.

Nevertheless, though it is generally admitted that Psychology does concern itself with the " states of consciousness " which disclose themselves in behaviour, it is now asserted that behaviour is also influenced—perhaps predominantly so—by what are called " *unconscious* mental states." It is said that " below the level of consciousness " there is a vast region of the mind which cannot be directly observed and of which we can have no immediate knowledge. This has been termed the " Unconscious "; though it has been suggested that, since the " contents " of the Unconscious cannot be recalled to consciousness by any mere act

of will, it would be better to describe this region of unfulfilled wishes and painful desires as the "Inaccessible." It is the place into which all painful desires and unfulfilled wishes are repressed by the mind, and from it these repressed desires and wishes issue forth in *disguise* and thus influence conduct in manifold and far-reaching ways. Now what is called the "New Psychology" (and also "Psycho-analysis") is a development of Psychology based very largely upon this doctrine of the Unconscious. It has a very wide vogue at the present time, and is exercising a great influence in many directions. It is true that a good deal of nonsense is being written upon this subject, and the reader is warned not to accept as "gospel" all that Psycho-analysts and others say on this matter. Yet it must be admitted that, in its broad outlines, the doctrine of the Unconscious seems pretty well established, and if so then the definition of Psychology as the "science of consciousness" must be rejected. Such a definition is too narrow, since it excludes all reference to these "unconscious mental states." It is far better to regard Psychology as the study of behaviour, provided we remember that we study behaviour only that we may be able to obtain a fuller and clearer understanding of

those mental processes, both conscious and unconscious, of which behaviour is the expression.

It may, however, be asked: What is Behaviour? What is the nature of this thing which we study for the sake of the light that it throws upon mental processes? The question is not difficult to answer. Behaviour, says Dr. McDougall, is "purposive activity," *i.e.,* activity directed towards the fulfilment of purposes and the achievement of ends which the organism manifesting the behaviour recognises, either vaguely or clearly, as being conducive to its well-being and good. This is the characteristic of living things as distinct from those things which are inert. You may pick up a number of pebbles on the sea-shore and put them in a box and they will remain just where you place them until they are again moved. But take a dog from its home and shut it away from its familiar haunts and faces; it will manifest a certain restlessness, make efforts to escape and, if released, will find its way home, however distant that home may be. The pebbles are inert; they belong to a well-marked class of things the movements and changes of which are determined *from the outside* in accordance with laws which are purely *mechanical.* The dog, on the other hand, is a living

organism; it belongs to an order of being the movements and changes of which are determined *from within* in accordance with laws that are not mechanical, but *vital*. In the latter case, the movements and changes are what we mean by "Behaviour." The organism possesses—what no inert thing can possess—the power of self-determination. Its activities are the expression of purposes which are either vaguely felt or clearly conceived. All that it does in the external world of perceptible reality is the manifestation of processes which take place in the inner world of mental life. And Psychology studies the former in order the better to understand the latter.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What would you say are the broad problems with which Psychology is concerned?

2. What difference do you think there is between Psychology defined as the "Science of Consciousness" and the same study defined as the "Science of Behaviour"?

3. How would a Christian answer those psychologists who advocate "a psychology without a soul"?

4. What is meant by the "Unconscious"? Why is it better described as the "Inaccessible"?

5. Explain what is meant by:
   (*a*) "Behavourism."
   (*b*) "The New Psychology."

CHAPTER II.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

It is no longer open to any man, however much of a sceptic he may profess himself to be, to question the reality and influence of what we call religion as a factor in the life of mankind. The modern study of Anthropology, *i.e.*, the science of man, has demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt that religion is an inseparable element of human experience, and is as universal as man himself. All the mass of evidence which recent research has discovered goes, without exception, to show that man has been, and still is, incurably religious. Wherever, on the face of the earth, man is found, there also is to be found religion, in one or another of its many forms. Indeed, so true is this that one of our leading authorities, Prof. Max Müller, has declared that "the real history of man is the history of religion," and the individual who endeavours to take a comprehensive survey of human experience soon discovers that religion has, from the earliest times, and right down through the ages, always

occupied a central and determining place in the life of the race. It is true that it has often been crude in its expressions and revolting in its manifestations; often indeed it has been so far removed from religion, as we Christians have been taught to understand the term, that some observers have felt inclined to deny that these expressions are at all worthy of the name "religion." And of course if we say with Parson Thwackum: "When I speak of religion, I mean the Christian religion; and when I say Christian religion, I mean the Protestant religion; and when I say Protestant religion, I mean the Church of England," then obviously we shall regard the religious life as being the characteristic of only a comparatively small fraction of the human race. There is, however, no justification for so restricting the meaning and range of religion. If we are going to understand religion at all we must define it in a way comprehensive enough to include what is essential in every manifestation of it, however crude. And when we do define it in this comprehensive way, then it cannot be denied that every race and every tribe in the world possesses it in some form or another. Even the French philosopher, Comte, who regarded religion in all its manifestations as a gross superstition, and hence wanted to get rid of it, admitted that

it embraces the whole of existence and that the history of religion covers the entire history of human development. It is true that religions decay and perish, but religion itself persists; the various forms of it are superseded, but the reality which expresses itself in these forms is immortal.

Moreover, just as religion is co-extensive with humanity, so is it *peculiar to humanity*. It is a distinctive characteristic of man—one of the few remaining lines of demarcation between man and the lower orders of creation. For although modern Psychology has proved that the higher activities which we find in human life have their roots in the instinctive impulses of the lower animals, it has failed to show that even the highest animals display any tendencies or modes of behaviour that may be termed religious. A lion's den may be a place of noise, but it is never a place of prayer; dogs bark and howl, but they never "make a joyful sound unto the Lord." They can never frame a conception of a Supreme Being—even a supreme lion, or a supreme dog—to whom they can offer the adoration of their hearts or the obedience of their lives. Of all the vast creation as we know it on this planet, only man reveals a "capacity for God"; he alone possesses a "genius for religion." This is true of even the most primitive types

of mankind. The highest animals do not possess religion; the lowest types of man do possess it: and this is sufficient to fix an unbridgeable gulf between the human race and every order of life beneath it. True, you may train your dog to guard your walking-stick, whereas, on the other hand, you would not trust an Australian aborigine any further than you could see him; and if it were necessary to choose between the animal and the man as companions you would unhesitatingly choose the former—you feel that you could always count on the dog and you fear that you could never count on the man. Nevertheless the fact remains: however much you may train your dog and however low in the scale of life the aborigine may be, there is "a great gulf fixed" between them that will never be bridged. The man possesses a religious consciousness and that is something which can never be imparted to the dog, however domesticated it may become.

But what is religion? it may be asked. What is this thing which so clearly separates man from the rest of the animal world? It is a question that is not easily answered, though many attempts to do so have been made. Prof. Leuba, in his book entitled *A Psychological Study of Religion,* has collected from various writers no less than

forty-eight different definitions of religion, while John Morley once scornfully remarked that "there are a thousand definitions of religion." Morley's remark is an obvious exaggeration. Nevertheless, as Prof. Leuba's investigations have shown, there is a decided lack of agreement among scholars as to the real nature of religion, and this fact in itself proves how extremely difficult it is to say exactly what religion is.

One of the chief obstacles in the way of framing a satisfactory definition of religion arises from the fact that religion expresses itself in so many different ways. It has many varied forms, almost too numerous to be counted, and the problem is to reduce these to a "common denominator" which shall state, in a succinct and pregnant phrase, the essential elements to be found in every manifestation of the religious consciousness. Hence any definition of religion, to be adequate, must indicate what is central in every expression of religion, from the lowest to the highest. It must be wide enough to cover the rudimentary beliefs and practices of primitive peoples as well as the developed ideas and usages of the most advanced civilised nations. It must state, implicitly if not explicitly, the characteristic features that are to be found in every form of religion, from its crude manifestations in

the strange and revolting customs of the Congo fetish-worshipper, to its highest expression in the spiritual conceptions and activities of the believer in Jesus Christ.

What is perhaps the simplest, and yet most comprehensive, definition of religion is that given by Dr. W. Newton Clarke in his *Outline of Christian Theology*. He says that by religion is meant "the life of man in his superhuman relations," and the value of this definition lies in the fact that it implicitly stresses three things which are to be found in religion at every level.

(*a*) The first is that the religious attitude is always directed towards an order of life which is higher than human. Man feels that there is a Power (or powers) above him, upon which he is dependent and towards which he has obligations. Moreover, he believes that this Power touches his life at every point; it directs and controls the whole course of nature in general and of human life in particular, and hence he dare not let it go unrecognised. In most forms of religion this Power is regarded as personal, and is represented by God (or the gods): and it is conceived as belonging to a higher than human sphere of existence, not because it is morally superior, but because it is regarded as being capable of exercising a more

than human force upon the course of man's life.

(*b*) But, in the second place, it must be noted that the religious attitude is not simply intellectual in character. In other words, religion is not just the *belief* that such a higher order exists—it is also an attempt on man's part to establish what he regards as the *right relationship* with this higher order. In all his religious activities man conceives it to be for his highest interests and well-being to " keep on good terms " with the Power which so largely controls and determines the course of his life. Hence religion always expresses itself in forms of worship, the most important of which are prayer and sacrifice. If—as in the lower types of religion—the higher order is regarded as malevolent, it becomes man's interest to ward off the anger which may come upon him; if—as in the more advanced religions —this order is thought of as benevolent, it becomes man's interest to secure its favour. And it is this aspect of religion that is emphasised in the definition given by Sir J. G. Frazer, in his *Golden Bough.* Religion, he asserts, is " a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life."

(*c*) In the third place, we need to

remember that religion is an activity of the *whole of man's nature,* and not simply of a part of it. It is "the *life* of man in his superhuman relations," and not merely a portion of his life. It is because they fail to stress this important fact that so many modern definitions of religion are unsatisfactory. Some define religion as if it were simply a matter of *belief,* as for example Dr. E. B. Tylor, who says that it consists of "belief in spiritual beings," and Dr. James Martineau, who asserts that it is "the belief in an everlasting God, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind." Others regard religion as being no more than a *system of feelings,* as for example Dr. J. E. McTaggart, who says: "Religion is clearly a state of mind. It seems to me that it may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of harmony between ourselves and the universe at large." Yet others think of religion as being chiefly a mode of behaviour—a matter of external rites and ceremonies—as in the definition of Sir J. G. Frazer quoted above. It is a mistake, however, to define religion in terms of only one aspect of human nature. Man's life is not a simple thing; it is a complex reality into which thought, feeling and will enter as its ultimate constituents. And

religion has the same complexity. It is an activity of the whole personality, involving intellectual, emotional, and volitional elements. The Higher Power which is the object of the religious attitude, is an object of thought, of feeling and of activity or will.

This fact is clearly seen in the act of worship. In every act of worship, the worshipper has some idea or thought, however vague, of the object of his adoration; his emotions of awe, reverence, gratitude, fear, etc., are stirred as he contemplates his god; and he is impelled by his ideas and feelings to activities, such as sacrifice and prayer. In the expression of the religious attitude, the whole personality of the worshipper is engaged; and hence, if we may adopt another definition of religion—that of Prof. R. H. Thouless—we may say that the religious attitude is essentially "a *felt, practical* relation with what is *believed in* as a superhuman being or beings." It is a kind of adjustment to the larger life of the universe, involving as its essential characteristics "a belief in beings or in a Being in some way controlling the cosmic process, towards whom the emotions of love and gratitude may be felt, combined with the distinctively religious emotion of awe, and with whom man comes into relationship by religious rites." It is not, of course, suggested that

these three elements of thought, feeling and will are equally present in every manifestation of the religious consciousness. It is probable that in the most primitive types of religion the emotional factor predominates, whereas in some of the highest forms of religion the intellectual element is the most prominent. Nevertheless, it remains true that religion is a reaction of the whole of man's personality, and that in every expression of it thought, feeling and will are more or less involved. It is not exclusively a matter of believing in certain doctrines, nor of experiencing certain emotions, nor even of participating in certain outward rites and ceremonies—it involves all three. Simply to believe in an order of life higher than human, or to feel awe in the presence of the beauty and mystery of the universe, or even to adopt certain modes of behaviour, is not in itself to be called religion. Religion must include, more or less, all three; otherwise it is not an expression of the whole of human personality. And a true psychology of religion must rest religion upon the total nature of man, and not upon any one part of it.

But while—as we have pointed out above—any adequate definition of religion must be wide enough to include every manifestation of the religious consciousness, from the

lowest to the highest, it must not be forgotten that religions differ very considerably in character, and that even when a satisfactory definition has been framed there still remains the problem of *classifying the various kinds of religion.* This is a problem which different scholars have attempted to solve in various ways. The German philosopher, Eduard von Hartmann, classifies religions as Natural and Supernatural, while another German scholar, Siebeck, divides them into Primitive Religions, Morality Religions, and Redemptive Religions. Another classification is that of Prof. Tiele, who makes the broad distinction between Nature Religions and Ethical Religions. Yet another is that which divides religions on the basis of the idea of God entertained by the worshippers. Thus some religions are *polytheistic, i.e.,* they involve the recognition and worship of many gods; others are *henotheistic, i.e.,* their votaries recognise many gods but worship only one who is regarded generally as the tribal deity and whose sphere of influence is associated with, and confined to, a particular locality; yet others are *pantheistic, i.e.,* they tend to identify God with nature—they believe that God is all and that all is God; and yet others are *monotheistic, i.e.,* that they believe in and worship only one God

who is generally regarded as "the God of the whole earth." Both polytheism and henotheism are to be found among the primitive tribes; instances of them are also to be noticed in the Old Testament. Pantheism, on its religious side, is best illustrated in Hinduism, the ancient religion of India. Buddhism (founded, in the sixth century B.C. by the Hindu sage Gautama)—"the despair of all who attempt an all-comprehensive definition of religion"—which was originally based on an atheistic philosophy has developed into a theistic, or, rather, a polytheistic, faith. There are three great monotheistic religions; these are Judaism (the religion of the Jews), Mohammedanism or Islam (founded by the Arabian prophet Mohammed in the seventh century A.D.) and Christianity. One other classification which deserves mention is that given by Dr. George Galloway in his book *The Philosophy of Religion.* He divides religions into Tribal, National and Universal, but this is really a statement of the stages of religious development rather than a classification of religion in the strict sense of the term.

We cannot here enter upon a discussion of the relative merits of these various classifications. Something can be said in favour of every one of them, but no one of

them is entirely satisfactory. The difficulty is to be certain just where one type of religion ends and another begins; indeed, within some of the greater faiths of mankind almost every type of religion is to be found. Perhaps the most satisfactory classification is that which distinguishes between Nature Religions and Ethical Religions. The Nature Religions, of which there are many kinds, may be broadly characterised as those in which the objects of worship are (or originally were) associated with the objects of the natural world, such as rocks, trees, rivers, the heavenly bodies, the seasons, etc.; and to this class belong most of the primitive faiths of mankind, as well as those of ancient China, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, etc. The Ethical Religions are those which arose as the result of an ethical revival brought about by the life and teaching of some great personality; and to this class belong the five great historic religions — Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism (founded by the Chinese sage Confucius in the sixth century B.C.), Mohammedanism and Christianity. Of these Ethical Religions three, viz. Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Christianity, are universal in scope and outlook. In the course of their historic development they have found their way to races and nations

other than those among whom they first arose, and they now deliberately profess their intention of conquering the world. For this reason they are frequently spoken of as "world-religions," and hence they are rival faiths. Christianity alone, however, enshrines a genuine universalism. While both Buddhism and Mohammedanism have made great headway in the East, they make practically no appeal to the Western world; and when their emissaries bring their "gospel" to Europe and America they make, it has been well said, "conversation rather than converts." Christianity, on the other hand, though originally an Eastern faith, has conquered the West (nominally at any rate) and is well on the way to complete triumph in the East.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. "Man is a religious animal." Can you justify this statement?

2. Suggest a definition of Religion and discuss it. Why is it difficult adequately to define Religion?

3. Which do you regard as the best way of classifying the Religions of the world?

4. "The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys" (1 Kings xx. 28). What form of Religion is implied in these words?

5. Consider the difference between:
   (*a*) Polytheism and Monotheism;
   (*b*) Nature Religions and Ethical Religions.

6. What is a "world-faith"? Do you think that Christianity will ultimately become the universal Religion, and if so why?

CHAPTER III.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION.

It was pointed out in the previous chapter that religion, in its essential and enduring features, is both an important and a universal factor in the life of the race. That such is the case is so generally recognised by seriously minded people to-day that we can regard the matter as settled beyond all reasonable dispute. Alexander Pope, in an oft-quoted couplet, tells us that "the proper study of mankind is man," and anyone who genuinely undertakes this "proper study of mankind," in one of the other of its many aspects, is bound sooner or later to realise the supreme importance of religious beliefs, ideals and practices in the development of human life. Indeed, it can be claimed that most of the great creative achievements of the race—at every level of culture—had their origin in religion, or at least were inspired by religious considerations. Whatever department of thought and life be considered, it will be discovered that men were made strong to create and to endure by virtue of the operation, in some form or other, of religious factors. As Emerson puts it:

"All the great ages have been ages of belief. When great national movements began, when arts appeared, when poems were made, the human soul was in earnest and had fixed its thoughts on spiritual realities with as strict a grasp as that of the hands on the sword or the pencil or the trowel." And this is by no means an isolated witness. The American essayist was merely saying what Goethe had asserted before him. "Men," says the German poet, "are creative in poetry and art only as long as they are religious; without religion they are merely imitative, lacking in originality." Moreover, the essayist and the poet are not alone in the testimony that they bear to the value of the religious factor in the life and thought of the race—the philosopher and the scientist are one with them in this respect. When a philosopher, like Hegel, says: "All peoples know that the religious consciousness is that wherein they possess truth; and religion they have ever regarded as their true dignity and the Sabbath of their life," and when a scientist, like Prof. Alfred Marshall, in writing upon the "Economics of Industry," urges that the only influences in man's developing life which are more important than economic influences are religious influences—when such speak in this fashion we may be certain that religion is

very far from being the negligible and unimportant thing that some people would have us believe.

Now if what we have said about the importance of religion is true, then it follows that this universal phenomenon of human life is worthy of the most serious consideration on the part of all those who desire really to understand the full nature of man. It must be remembered, however, that so complex and so widespread a factor in man's life can be considered from more than one point of view. For example, we may approach the study of religion from the standpoint of history. That is to say, we may consider the historical development of the various forms of religion and endeavour to trace the unfolding of the essence of the religious consciousness in the manifold religious beliefs, practices and customs of mankind. Or again, we may approach the study of religion from the standpoint of the truth and falsity of its fundamental principles. We may take the beliefs of a particular faith, such as Christianity, and try to see how far we can regard them as being true. Yet again, we may accept the teaching of a particular religion as true—once more we may instance Christianity—and then attempt to set forth in clear and systematic manner all that it has to say about God and man and

about the relations between them. The first of these three points of view is that of what is called the Science of Comparative Religions; the second is the standpoint of what is known as the Philosophy of Religion; the third is the standpoint of Theology—though it should be remembered that these three cannot be kept in "watertight compartments"; they overlap at certain points and thus cannot be kept entirely distinct from one another.

But besides these three methods of approach to the study of religious phenomena, there is also the *psychological point of view*, the application of which gives rise to what is known as the Psychology of Religion. Now it is this psychological approach to the study of religion that is so influential and so dominant at the present time. More than half a century ago, Archbishop Temple predicted the rise of a new theology "based on psychology instead of logic," and the remark has been repeated in effect many times since. It is an assertion which needs to be received with caution, if only for the simple reason that a theology that is not based on clear and logical thinking is foredoomed to be cast aside on to the scrapheap. Nevertheless, no true theology can afford to neglect those facts which are revealed by psychological analysis of the contents of the religious

consciousness and by psychological insight into the manifestations of the religious life; and if this is what Dr. Temple meant then some of the most marked theological developments of the past thirty years have gone a long way towards fulfilling his prophecy. For while it would not be true to say that the theology of the present time is based entirely upon psychology, it *is* true that modern theology is very largely characterised by the psychological point of view.

Of course, it must not be thought that the psychological approach to religion is an entirely new departure, or that all the great thinkers of the Church were devoid of psychological insight into the meaning of the religious life. In a somewhat crude and unsystematic way the psychological method in religion was used by St. Augustine in the fourth century, by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, and by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century; to say nothing of the fact that the Bible itself, in its many scattered references to human personality, gives us the beginnings of a Psychology of Religion. Yet it was not until comparatively recent times that the methods and the standpoint of psychology were brought seriously and scientifically to bear upon the facts of the religious life, and since the beginning of the present century great

progress has been made in the psychological study of religion. Much of this progress is due to the rise of the New Psychology with its elaborate technique for investigating the content and manifestations of the "unconscious," though most of the advance has been made on the practical, rather than on the theoretical, side. Indeed, it has been said of Prof. Freud—the founder of the New Psychology—that he has succeeded in revolutionizing psychological *practice* with psychological *theories* that are fifty years behind the times.

The question, however, may be asked: What exactly is meant by the psychological approach to religion? What is the scope and aim of religious psychology? The answer may be given in the words of one of the pioneers in the application of psychological methods to the facts of the religious life. "The Psychology of Religion," says Dr. Starbuck, "has for its work to carry the well-established methods of science into the analysis and organisation of the facts of the religious consciousness, and to ascertain the laws which determine its growth and character." And again, he says: "The end in view is . . . to see into the laws and processes at work in the spiritual life." Now the aim of every science—no matter what its particular subject-matter may be—is to

classify the facts which it observes and to formulate the general principles which those facts embody. A science is not merely a string of unrelated facts; a mere isolated fact possesses a minimum of significance—indeed, it may be said that it has no significance at all. Science spells system and science is knowledge. There can be no knowledge in the truest and deepest sense of the term unless facts are classified and principles or laws formulated. If, therefore, as Dr. Starbuck asserts, the Psychology of Religion aims at analysing and organising the facts of the religious life, and if it attempts to understand the laws and processes at work in religious experience, then it can truly claim to be scientific in tone and outlook. That it is so can hardly be disputed. It is the scientific treatment of the facts of the religious consciousness. It traces religion back to its roots in the fundamental impulses of the human mind; it classifies the various types of religious experience; it takes such facts as "conversion," and lays bare the mental processes in which they consist. In a word, it shows how the mind works when it expresses itself religiously; it studies religious behaviour in order to understand the experiences of which that behaviour is the expression.

That some people should strongly object to

the work of the religious psychologist because the Psychology of Religion does do these things can be quite understood. To many earnest minds the psychological study of religious experience seems to expunge from that experience all reference to such superhuman influences as the grace of God. And they have good ground for their fears, for it cannot be denied that some psychologists—such as the American Behaviourists, and the followers of Freud—have used psychological investigation, not to explain, but to *explain away* the real meaning of religion. Indeed, the vagaries and extravagant assertions of some writers on this subject give point to the suggestion made by Dr. L. P. Jacks to the effect that the psychologist of religion is about the last person in the world who is likely to be converted.

There are, however, three considerations which if borne in mind will help to disarm suspicion of the psychological method in the religion. The first is this. When the psychologist proceeds, even on the basis of his alleged " findings," to assert that religion is purely a contrivance of the human mind having no reference to an order of existence higher than the world of time and sense—when he proceeds to do this, he has left the realm of psychology, with its description of

facts, and entered the sphere of the philosophy of religion, with its discussion of values. For it should ever be remembered that psychology is merely a *descriptive* science. Its business is to describe facts, to report on what it discovers as the result of analysing mental processes and of observing behaviour; it has no right to pronounce upon the ultimate validity of those facts. Its task is to show how the mind of the religious subject works and it exceeds its duty when it goes on to decide the question of the truth and reality of religion. Secondly, it is quite possible, as Prof. R. H. Thouless points out, to exaggerate the fear that the psychological study of religion will destroy religious faith. After all, if the psychologist's explanation of the facts of religious experience is true, it is true only *as far as it goes* and by no means excludes or nullifies the "higher" explanation given by the theologian and religious philosopher. The psychologist, for example, may attempt to set forth in the language and terms of his science the mental laws by which such an experience as "conversion" takes place, and his explanation may be quite true; but it does not follow that this explanation is incompatible with that of the Christian theologian who holds that "conversion" is brought about by the grace of God manifested and bestowed in

Jesus Christ our Lord. It merely means that the psychologist and the theologian are explaining the same event, but on different levels. The former, as a descriptive scientist, limits himself to the explanation that satisfies the demands of his particular department of thought; the latter presses on to the ultimate truth which religious experience embodies. It is, of course, true that the psychologist may regard the theologian's explanation as wrong, but he has no more right than "the man in the street" to dogmatise on that point. "To one who is sure that he has the vision of God, the psychologist of religion (pronouncing on the ultimate validity of religious experience) can be no more than a blind man talking about colours." Thirdly, those who object to the application of psychological methods to religion should remember that the religious psychologist *has* been at work and that it is therefore really too late in the day to make any effective protest. For more than a quarter of a century psychological methods have been applied to religious experience (and applied with a certain amount of success) and it is of no use now trying "to put the clock back." If the Psychology of Religion can give us any real help in understanding the facts of the religious life it is foolish to demur; a

religion that is afraid of new knowledge, from whatever quarter it comes, is doomed from the very beginning and must sooner or later be relegated to the scrapheap for discarded faiths.

Assuming, then, that the psychological approach to religion is perfectly legitimate, what are the methods of religious psychology? In other words, how does the Psychology of Religion classify the data and trace the laws of the spiritual life? And what are the materials to which it applies the methods? We may answer these questions about methods and material together.

1. There is, first of all, the introspective analysis of the individual's own religious consciousness. Introspection is a method peculiar to psychology. It is really self-observation and consists of attending "to the working of one's own mind and to one's own immediate experiences in a more or less systematic way." Generally speaking, we give our attention to external objects, *i.e.*, to the things outside of us; we attend, not to our "states of consciousness," but to the objects which give rise to these mental states. Sometimes, however, we turn our attention to some aspect or fact of our experience, as when we notice that we are hungry or when we try to recall how it feels

to be afraid or depressed. In such cases we are practising self-observation or introspection, although we may not do it with the precision of the trained psychologist. Now this introspective method can be used in the psychological study of religion. For example, a man may try to analyse the thoughts and feelings which he has in some moment of solemn worship, or he may seek to distinguish the various factors which constrain him to believe in God, or he may recall his " conversion " and attempt to trace the various mental aspects of the experience; and when he does any one of these he is applying the method of self-observation. Most religious psychologists have attempted to use this method, but they have recognised its limitations as being purely individual and " subjective," and have therefore sought to correct their findings by comparison with the results yielded by the application of the other methods.

2. Secondly, there is the examination of the vast mass of evidence as to the nature of religious experience that is to be found in the biographies and autobiographies of the saints. It is just because they provide such evidence that such works are so valuable for the religious life and have been pressed into service by the religious psychologist. Among the most important of these

are the "Confessions of St. Augustine," the lives of such saints as Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Sienna, the writings of such mystics as Jacob Boemhe, John Tauler, and Thomas à Kempis, and in more recent times Bunyan's *Grace Abounding,* and John Wesley's *Journal.* The great service which this material renders to the religious psychologist can be seen in Prof. William James's great work on the Psychology of Religion, *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* It should be remembered, however, that the lives and writings of the saints set forth a type of religious experience that is abnormal and unusual in character. Hence, if we attempt to base our religious psychology exclusively upon the data which they supply, that psychology will tend to be severely onesided. Many people, for example, when they read for the first time such striking stories of conversion as are told by Harold Begbie, in *Broken Earthenware,* and in his other books, are so impressed that they are inclined to think that every instance of true conversion must approximate more or less closely to this violent and spectacular type. Herein lies a danger which must be avoided. We may well recognise the evidential or apologetic value for Christianity of these outstanding examples of "the power of the Gospel of

Christ," but we must always remember that they *are* outstanding in character and must therefore not be made the standard by which to test the reality of conversions which are of a less spectacular nature. Indeed, in this connection we would do well to remember the words of the saintly William Law: "Conversion to God is often sudden, but this suddenness is by no means the essence of true conversion, and is neither to be demanded in ourselves nor required of others. The purification of our souls is not a thing done in an instant, but is a certain process, a gradual release from our captivity and disorder, consisting of several stages and degrees—both of life and death—which the soul must go through before it can have thoroughly put off the 'old man.'" Or, as the "Angel Adjutant," in Harold Begbie's *Broken Earthenware,* more vividly puts it: "Conversion is a long road."

3. Thirdly, there is what is known as the Questionnaire Method which has been of great service in obtaining from ordinary religious people material for the psychologist of religion to work upon. This method consists in addressing certain leading questions to a number of people and then, by analysing and classifying the answers, trying to see what are the laws and processes of the normal

religious experience. The chief exponent of this method is Dr. Starbuck, who used it extensively in connection with his investigations into the psychological nature of "Conversion." It has also been employed by other religious psychologists, notably Prof. J. B. Pratt, who endeavoured, by means of it, to discover the mental factors which determine the belief in God. A great deal of psychological material has been obtained by this questionnaire method, but its value to the religious psychologist is seriously impaired by the fact that it presupposes an exact use of the introspective method on the part of those who endeavour to answer the question sent to them. But ordinary people cannot employ self-observation with sufficient exactitude to render their answers of very high value for the purposes of psychological investigation. At best only approximate results can be obtained in this way, and hasty generalisation has to be eschewed. For example, Prof. Pratt sent out the question: "Why do you believe in God?" Of the answers received only twenty-five per cent ascribed their belief to the fact that they had been so taught by parents and teachers, but it does not follow that the whole of the remaining seventy-five per cent. are to be excluded from the class of people who believe in God as the result

of the teaching of others. It is pretty certain that some portion of that seventy-five per cent. were unable to introspect with sufficient precision to realise that the most important factor leading to their belief in God was just the fact that they had been taught to do so by other people. Thus we see that the questionnaire method, based as it is upon the introspective method, needs to be used with great caution, and even then, as Dr. W. B. Selbie says, it "cannot be regarded as providing a sufficiently broad basis for a psychology of religion." Nevertheless it is a perfectly legitimate method, "and, under proper safeguards, may yield some interesting and even valuable results."

4. Lastly, there is the careful analysis, classification and comparison of the religious beliefs and practices of mankind the world over. This of course involves that comparative study of religions to which reference was made earlier in this chapter, but in this case the study is determined by psychological, rather than by a historical, interest. The religious customs, habits, ideas, folklore and literature of *every* religion (and not merely of Christianity) are carefully considered in order to discover, as far as possible, the psychological nature and background of the manifold religious experiences of the race. This method alone

is capable of providing a foundation secure enough for a psychology of religion, since not only does it really involve the three methods mentioned above, but is sufficiently comprehensive to include the examination of every kind of religious phenomena. Less than that the religious psychologist cannot regard as sufficient. Whatever his own religious convictions may be (and remember he may be an ardent Christian), the psychologist of religion cannot refuse to take cognisance of *all* the facts bearing upon the problems he is investigating. As Prof. Thouless puts it: "We must examine the strange writings of the erotic mystics and the wilder American revivals with the same scientific respect as we show to the services of matins and evensong in the Established Church." If we are to have an adequate Psychology of Religion, the religious psychologist—whatever his theological views—must make fullest use of all the available material. He must carefully study the religious ideas and practices of men everywhere, quite independently of the fact whether or not he feels that he can accept those ideas or countenance those practices. His survey and treatment of the data of his science must be as comprehensive and as scientific as he can possibly make them.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God " (Matt iv. 4). In the light of this statement consider Religion as a factor in social development.

2. From what different points of view can we approach the study of Religion?

3. Why do some people object to the Psychological study of Religion, and how are they to be answered?

4. " Introspection is really self-observation." Discuss this. To what limitations is the introspective method exposed?

5. What is the value of religious biographies and autobiographies for Religious Psychology?

6. Explain, and give an example of, the Questionnaire Method. Compare it with the Comparative Method.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF RELIGION.

HOWEVER much some Christian people may feel justified in objecting to the psychological study of religious experience, there is at least one thing that the new science has done for which they ought to be devoutly thankful—it has proved beyond dispute the fact that religion is *natural* to man. In view of the findings of religious psychology it is no longer possible to maintain (as some eighteenth century writers did) that religion is an artificial product, the crafty invention of wily priests who were actuated by a desire to enslave, for their own ends and aggrandisement, the minds of their fellow-men. Man is not naturally an atheist, and religion is no more the invention of priests than sleep is the invention of the manufacturer of brass bedsteads. Rather religion is as natural to man as is sleep itself, and the priest arose—as the bedstead maker arose—simply because there existed in man's constitution a fundamental need that called aloud for satisfaction. Man's primitive state was not one of "superstitious atheism,"

as some people would have us believe, and the religions of the world are not simply "the transfigured terrors of the savage." Religion is grounded in human nature, and as Dr. A. M. Fairbairn says: "No man is an atheist by nature, only by art; and art that has to offer to nature ceaseless resistance. The man who claims to be an atheist does not . . . relieve himself from religion; he only exchanges a reasonable for an absurd form of it. Nature as it exists in man fights against unbelief; and if vanquished on one side is bound to win a terrible victory on the other."

Yet, although man is by nature a "religious animal," it does not follow that he is such because he possesses a definite *religious faculty*. That was the older way of accounting for the fact that religion is a native endowment of the human mind, and is part and parcel of the now discredited "faculty psychology." The older psychologists were accustomed to regard the human mind as composed of distinct faculties such as reason, conscience, memory, imagination, and so on, and those who regarded religion as natural to man did so because they held that man possessed a faculty for religion. Most modern psychologists reject the conception of "faculty" on the ground that psychological analysis

fails to reveal the existence of these distinct faculties in the mind's make-up. For example, conscience is now seen to be, not a separate entity in human nature, but the *whole* mind of man occupied with moral phenomena; similarly, what is called the will is not a faculty distinct from other faculties, but character—*i.e.*, the sum-total of the individual's dispositions, innate and acquired—in action. The mind is an organic unity and cannot be departmentalised in the manner suggested by the older psychologists. Yet it must not be thought that this "faculty psychology" was entirely devoid of truth. Its exponents were trying to account for something which the modern psychologist prefers to express by means of the word "capacity." Thus it is said that man possesses the capacity to remember, the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, the capacity to decide between conflicting lines of conduct. But in each case the whole personality is engaged, and not simply a distinct faculty which, in its functioning, is more or less independent of every other faculty.

Now what we have said about "faculty" and "capacity" applies to religion, as well as to remembering, willing, etc. The fact that the old "faculty psychology" is now discredited means that we can no longer

speak (save in a loose and popular way) of a "religious faculty." Religion cannot be referred merely to a *part* of man's nature; it is not the expression or manifestation of simply one aspect or department of the human mind. As Prof. D. Miall Edwards says: "There is no part of man's psychical nature which can be labelled religious in the sense that it is that part *alone* which functions in his religious life and that it functions *only* in the religious life." Religion is an expression of man's whole being; it is the total personality of man entering into, and maintaining, relations with an order of existence which is regarded as being higher than human. On the other hand, man could not enter into, and maintain, these relations unless he possessed a capacity for doing so. We could never explain the rise of religion if man's original state had been one of "superstitious atheism," any more than we could explain morality if we denied that man has always had from the very beginning the capacity of distinguishing those actions which are right from those which are wrong. Even if we believe in what is known as "Revelation" —and Christianity claims to be based on God's revelation of His character and purpose in Jesus Christ—we cannot believe that that revelation was given to creatures devoid

of the capacity to receive it. Revelation is not an attempt to impose upon man something which is alien to his true nature; it is rather God's response to man's fundamental need—a need, moreover, that was created by Him who answers and satisfies it. "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." The force of this contention can be made plainer by means of a simple illustration. Suppose that that section of the human race to which the term "heathen" is applied were absolutely devoid of anything in the nature of religion, and did not possess even the *latent* capacity for religious experience. How impossible would be the task of the Christian missionary! He would find it utterly beyond his power to superimpose the revelation of the Gospel upon minds to which religion was entirely foreign. It would be like trying to teach blind men to see the beauties of nature or deaf men to hear the marvellous symphonies of the great musicians. The task of the Christian missionary is difficult as it is—it would be impossible if men were not naturally religious. Of course, it must be admitted that some men seem to be without this capacity for religion (though the claim that some primitive tribes are atheistic has never been substantiated); but this does not prove

that the capacity for religion is non-existent, any more than the fact that some people are blind proves that the capacity to see is not a natural human endowment. But there is no need to labour this point. That man possesses a natural capacity for religion is one of the "assured results" of modern religious psychology.

It may be asked, however: In what way did this capacity for religion first express itself? How did the religious consciousness first manifest itself in primitive life? The question has been much discussed in recent years, and several theories of the psychological origin of religion have been propounded. Herbert Spencer contended that the religious consciousness first expressed itself in ancestor-worship, these ancestors appearing in the form of ghosts whom the worshippers feared. Thus Spencer found the psychological origin of religion in the emotion of fear—fear of the dead. To-day, however, very few psychologists or anthropologists would accept this ghost-theory. Another, and more influential, theory, is that associated with the name of Prof. E. B. Tylor. In his monumental work, *Primitive Culture,* Prof. Tylor propounds the Animistic view of the origin of religion. Animism is "the belief that external things have a life or spirit akin to man's." It holds

that all nature is alive in the sense that all the objects of the natural world—trees, rivers, rocks, etc., as well as animals—possess a kind of quasi-material soul or spirit. Now this animistic conception is, according to Prof. Tylor, the basis and groundwork of religion, since the earliest manifestations of the religious consciousness, consisted in primitive man's endeavours to establish relations with his living environment. While it cannot be denied that the whole of mankind seems to have passed through this animistic stage, Animism as a theory of the origin of religion does not seem to be completely satisfactory. For one thing, it implies a notion of the soul that could have been reached only as the result of a long process of thought and reflection, and there is good reason to believe that man expressed himself religiously long before he had risen to the idea of a soul, either in himself or in the objects of nature. For another thing, Animism while it may serve as a theory of the historical origin of religion, falls short of suggesting a psychological motive why primitive man should seek to enter into relations with his wider environment. Hence, there has been suggested another, and more psychological, theory of the origin of religion—a theory which, though it does not exclude the

animistic theory, does seem to trace religion back to its primary source in the nature of man. This view, formulated by Dr. R. R. Marett, has been called Animatism, because it goes back to a pre-animistic stage and finds the origin of religion in "a sense of awe in the presence of a diffused, indefinable, mysterious power or powers not regarded as personal." This power (which is usually described by the Melanesian term "mana") is an "all-pervading supersensual influence that operates in unexpected ways or appears in natural objects of striking character." It is a mysterious and uncanny force which appears to be diffused throughout the world of nature, yet is capable of intense concentration in various objects which it thereby invests with a divine character. Primitive man felt that this awe-inspiring power was everywhere about him. He saw it in almost every extraordinary person and thing, and in every striking occurrence in nature. It seemed to him to permeate all things and yet to manifest itself in concentrated form in conspicuous objects and unexpected happenings; hence he came to regard it as "an indefinite reservoir of energy in the universe upon which man can draw for good or ill." It is in primitive man's reaction to this mysterious mana that we find the raw material of religion. In the

presence of this indefinable, uncanny force primitive man experienced an overwhelming sense of wonder and awe. Moreover, he felt that this strange something had an intimate bearing upon his life and could influence it for weal or for woe; indeed, he believed that it was available for him in the struggle for existence, that it could aid him to secure the things which he regarded as worth having in life. Hence, he sought to enter into friendly relations with this mana, to utilise it for his own ends, and thus religion arose.

As theories of the origin of religion, both Animism and Animatism agree in emphasing the specific character of that adjustment to the universe in which the religious consciousness first manifested itself. However low in the scale of being primitive man may seem to have been, he was far above the lower orders of creation in that he possessed a capacity for religion. No doubt in many respects his way of life was not far removed from that of the animals with whom he contended for mastery; yet he belonged to a higher level of existence than they did because he was capable of responding to his environment in a manner that was not simply physical. To him the universe in which he found himself had *meaning,* and he made it his business to discover that

meaning and then to regulate his life accordingly. True, the interpretation that he read into the universe was very crude, and his behaviour even more crude. Nevertheless, the fact remains that man did react to his environment in a religious way and that he did so because his fundamental needs demanded it. And both Animism and Animatism emphasise this fact. But it must be admitted that the latter view is the more adequate theory of the psychological origin of religion in that it stresses the truth that primitive man's religious adjustment to his environment was primarily *emotional* in character, though of course the emotional content expressed itself in a very practical attitude. Animism, on the other hand, as a theory of the origin of religion, credits primitive man with powers of thought which it is difficult to believe he possessed. Religion is (as was stated in Chapter II.) "a felt, practical relationship with what is believed in as a superhuman being or beings," but in the case of primitive man emotion or feeling was the primary constituent, whereas anything in the nature of belief was of the most rudimentary kind. And indeed it is this primary emotional content that seems to be the most unchanging part of religion. Theologies may come and go, but the feelings of awe and

reverence in religion seem to abide. As far as the intellectual expression of religion goes, the religion of the modern Christian is as far as the poles asunder from that of the primitive savage—in the matter of the elemental religious feelings they are very close together.

The theory that the first manifestations of the religious consciousness were characterised by a strong emotional content, and that this emotional content was the primary factor in primitive man's religious adjustment to the universe, has been recently re-stated in a new and emphatic form by the German theologian, Dr. Rudolf Otto. In his book, *The Idea of the Holy,* Dr. Otto argues that religion arose and developed because the human mind possessed, from the very first, a unique capacity for experiencing an emotion which is best described as the emotion of "awe." At first sight, this view does not appear to be radically different from the animatistic theory of Dr. Marett. It *is* different, however, as will be seen when it is noted that this capacity in which the psychological roots of religion are to be found is a *unique* capacity, and that the emotion of awe in which religion primarily consists is something very different from terror or intellectual perplexity and cannot

be explained in terms other than itself. This emotion, which is evoked in the presence of a reality which is mysterious and "non-rational," is "a unique, original feeling-response, which . . . claims consideration in its own right." It is in this that religion primarily consists. "Daemons and gods alike spring from this root, and all ostensible explanations of the origin of religion in terms of animism or magic or folk-psychology are doomed to wander astray and miss the real gist of their enquiry, unless they recognise this fact of our nature—primary, unique, underivable from anything else—to be the basic factor and the basic impulse underlying the entire process of religious development." Now it needs hardly to be said that there is much more in Prof. Otto's theory than this; nevertheless, the quotations given set forth the essence of his view, and are sufficient to enable us to see the stress that is here laid upon the unique emotional content in which the first manifestations of the religious consciousness are alleged to consist. And while it is true that there is a good deal in this theory of "the Holy" to which objection can be raised—for example, as Prof. Miall Edwards says: "It is no service to religion to reduce it to *dumb, inarticulate* feeling"—it must be admitted that Dr. Otto has done well to emphasise the

fact that religion is a unique element in human nature. Yet we must insist that that uniqueness consists, not in the possession of a distinct religious faculty, or even a distinct religious instinct, but in the native ability of the human mind—as a unified whole consisting of thought, feeling and will—to respond to the higher order of existence. Moreover, although Prof. Otto's theory seriously errs in stressing the emotional aspect of religion to the utter exclusion of the rational and intellectual factors, it does make a real contribution to the study of the psychological origin of religion by its insistence upon the truth that the religious consciousness first expressed itself in an overwhelming sense of awe in the presence of the mysterious and the sacred.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. "Man is religious because he possesses a 'religious faculty.'" How far is this statement false? How far is it true?

2. Assume that Christianity is the only Religion that has ever arisen in the world, and consider what bearing this would have on the missionary task of the Church.

3. Explain what is meant by Animism, and discuss the question whether or not it was the earliest form of Religion.

4. "In primitive religion the emotional aspect predominates." Discuss this with special reference to what is known as Animatism.

5. Explain Dr. Rudolf Otto's "Idea of the Holy" as a theory of the origin of Religion.

CHAPTER V.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF RELIGION.

It is necessary for us at this point to remind ourselves of the fact (explained in Chapter II.) that religion is an activity of the whole of man's nature, and not simply of a part of it. This is all the more imperative since the theories of the psychological origin of religion to which we have just been referring tend to lay emphasis upon one aspect of the religious consciousness and to neglect those other aspects which, though not so prominent in the early beginnings of religion, nevertheless had their part to play. After all, man is a being who thinks and wills, as well as feels, and thinking and willing are as fundamental to man's religious adjustment to the universe as is feeling, though at first they were not so conspicuous. For we must remember that these are the three fundamental aspects of consciousness, and that they always exist together. It is true that in some experiences one aspect may predominate, and the other two be not so noticeable in consequence; nevertheless,

in every experience all three are more or less present, and although we may distinguish them in thought for the purposes of psychological theory, we cannot separate them in practice, however much we may try. As Prof. Leuba puts it: "Will, feeling and thought enter in some degree into every moment of consciousness which can be looked upon as an actuality, and not merely as an abstraction; they are necessary constituents of consciousness. The unit of consciousness is neither thought, nor feeling, nor will, but is all three in movement towards an object."

Yet it is surprising how often this fact has been forgotten by those who have endeavoured to set forth the psychological basis of religion. This is where so many definitions of religion go wrong (as was pointed out in Chapter II.). Most writers seem to imagine that they can find the essence of the religious consciousness in one or the other of the three ultimate constituents of the mind. How many, for example, have urged that the vital element in religion is a particular feeling or emotion. Centuries ago, the Latin poet, Lucretius, (born about 94 B.C.) in his poem "Concerning the Nature of Things," taught that the essence of religion consisted in fear, and in the eighteenth century the Scottish philo-

sopher, David Hume, held very much the same view. In our own day, a modified form of the theory, based on a more adequate psychology, is advocated by Prof. W. McDougall. Other thinkers have suggested other "feelings" as the "deeper source of religion." Thus Prof. Teile says that the essence of religion is the feeling of adoration, while the German theologian, Schleiermacher, declares that it consists in a feeling of absolute dependence upon God.

Now it must be admitted (as we have shown in the previous chapter) that in all probability the emotional aspect was originally more prominent than either of the other two. But it is a mistake to abstract this aspect from the others and think that by so doing we unveil the very heart of religion. Yet even some of those who have avoided this error, as far as "feeling" is concerned, have gone to the other extreme in laying almost exclusive emphasis upon either activity or thought. Dr. Auguste Sabatier, for instance, derives religion from the volitional aspect of mental life, asserting that its essence consists in *struggle;* while Dr. E. B. Tylor and Prof. Max Müller refer it to the purely intellectual side of consciousness—to them religion is merely the *belief* in superhuman beings or an attempt to explain the universe. This, we repeat, is

a profound mistake. Consciousness is a unity of thought, feeling and will, and religion is a response of the whole personality in that in it thought, feeling and will are all more or less involved. We cannot separate one factor from the others and label it as specifically religious. It is the whole man who is religious and not simply a part of him.

Much more could be said along these lines, but considerations of space forbid. It will serve our purpose better if we approach this question of the psychological basis of religion from another point of view, viz., that of modern Social Psychology. Now no one who reads the works of such modern Social Psychologists as Prof. W. McDougall, Dr. W. H. Rivers, and Prof. James Drever, can fail to notice the great stress which is laid upon what are called the "Instincts." These instincts may be defined, in a general sort of way, as inborn or inherited tendencies to respond to a given situation in a particular manner. The duckling, for example, enters a pond for the first time and begins to swim as if it is quite used to the procedure, though it has never been in the water before. The stoat, when it is old enough to look after its own interests, chases the rabbit although it has never received any instruction in the art;

and the rabbit, strongly objecting to the process of being followed by the stoat, does its best to escape the unwelcome attentions of its pursuer. In all three instances the activity is an instinctive activity. The duckling swims in the pond, the stoat follows the rabbit, and the rabbit flees from its pursuer, all because they have an innate disposition to act in this way. It is part of their inherited structure; they act in this way because their nature determines it so. Does man possess instincts as do the lower orders of life? At one time the answer would have been an emphatic negative. "Nothing is commoner," says Prof. W. James, "than the remark that man differs from the lower creatures by the almost total absence of instincts, and the assumption of their work in him by 'reason.'" That was the view of the older psychologists. They were accustomed to draw a sharp line of demarcation between animal behaviour and human behaviour by saying that the one was based entirely upon instinct, while the latter was directed solely by intelligence, "instinct" and "intelligence" being regarded as almost antithetical terms.

Most modern psychologists reject this view altogether. Their investigations in the realm of Social Psychology have led them to the opinion that instinct and intelligence differ,

not in kind, but only in degree. It may be doubted, however, if the term "intelligence" in this connection is quite synonymous with "reason." By "reason" is meant the power of using the categories of thought, the knowledge of the relations of things; by "intelligence" is meant "plasticity of response," *i.e.*, the organism's ability to adapt itself to its environment. And using the term "intelligence" in this sense we can indeed regard its difference from instinct as being one purely of degree and not of kind. Moreover, psychologists have come to the further conclusion that man is as richly endowed with instincts as are the lower creatures, save that in his case they are so over-laid and modified by habit and experience that they are not so readily recognisable. In view of these findings it is no longer possible for us to-day to believe, as did the seventeenth century philosopher, John Locke, that the mind of the new-born child is a mere *tabula rasa,* simply a piece of blank paper with nothing written upon it. On the contrary, we must believe that every man from the very beginning of his experience is like the rest of the animal creation in the possession of these innate tendencies which we call "instincts." Some of these tendencies, it is true, do not manifest themselves until some

time after birth; nevertheless, they are present from the very beginning. The food-seeking instinct, the instinct to flee from danger, the instinct to fight, the instinct of curiosity, the sex-instinct, the instinct of self-abasement—these and the other principal instincts (and there are about fourteen all told) are latent in the mind at the very start of the life-process, waiting only for the appropriate moment to reveal themselves.

Now there are several facts about the instincts that we must bear in mind, if we want clearly to understand the problem of the psychological basis of religion.

1. The first is this. Every instinct functions as a total state of consciousness. That is to say, every time one of these innate tendencies expresses itself the three ultimate factors of mental life are involved, viz., thought, feeling, and will (or in more exact psychological terms, Cognition, Affection, and Conation). Finding ourselves in a given situation, we perceive an object, we experience a certain feeling in the presence of that object, and we act or tend to act in a certain manner in relation to the object. For example, we see a lion at large; we have a feeling of fear; and we hide or run away as fast as our legs can carry us. In such a case, we have the functioning of the instinct

of flight or self-preservation. And so with the other instincts. All three aspects of mental life are involved, for instinct is the living (not mechanical) response of the whole mind or organism (not merely a part of it) to a total situation.

2. In every one of the principal instincts the feeling or Affective aspect is the most noticeable, and most unvarying, part of the tendency. Now this feeling aspect is what is known as emotion, and in some instances the emotion is so marked that the tendency is generally named after it. For example, we speak of the instinct of anger, when we mean the instinct to fight; and of the instinct of fear, when we mean the instinct of self-preservation or flight. Indeed, the predominance of feeling in the earliest manifestations of the religious consciousness (as explained in Chapter IV.) is undoubtedly due to the fact that the emotional aspect of the primary instincts is so prominent.

3. The instincts are the channels through which the fundamental life-force expresses itself. This life-force (which has been called by such names as "horme," "elan vital," and—by the Freudians—"libido") actuates every living organism from the amœba at the bottom of the life-scale to man at the top, compelling it to maintain itself against

everything that would reduce it to the category of dead matter or inert things. It has been likened to a reservoir of energy upon which the organism draws for the purposes of living; and it appears that every organism has an original endowment of it. It is this life-force that gives unity to the instinctive tendencies, binding them into a complex whole; and in virtue of the fact that these instincts are the media through which this biological urge expresses itself, they become the " prime movers " in all the organism's adjustment to its environment. Moreover, in the case of man, these innate tendencies are the raw material of character, the energy which is available for the individual's life being mediated through the instinctive basis of personality.

Now it is not difficult to make clear the bearing of this discussion of the instincts upon the question of the psychological basis of religion. If the instincts are the channels through which the life force expresses itself; and if, moreover, they constitute the basis of personality and the raw material of character, then it is obvious that it is in these instinctive tendencies that we are to find the natural roots of the religious life. That does not mean that all the instincts, regarded as separate entities, are equally involved. Nor again does it mean that the psycho-

logical basis of religion is to be found in any one particular innate tendency. This latter mistake has been made by quite a number of writers on the subject. For example, those who maintain that religion had its origin in fear are really maintaining that the natural roots of religion are to be found only in the instinct of self-preservation or flight, and that in its essence it is nothing more than "pure funk." Again, Dr. W. Trotter, in his *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War,* asserts that religion is merely a transformation of, or development from, the gregarious or herd instinct (by which is meant the innate tendency of individuals to seek the company of their fellows, to live together in groups and to respond to their *social* environment). Yet again, the Freudian Psycho-Analysts urge that religion—as indeed all the higher activities of mankind —has its roots in the sex instinct; indeed, one writer of this school, Theodore Schroeder, makes the absurd and unwarranted statement that "all religion in its beginning is a mere misrepresentation of sex ecstasy." All such attempts to refer religion to only one of the instinctive impulses are based either upon sheer prejudice against religion, as in the case of Schroeder, or upon faulty psychological analysis, as in the case of Trotter. An adequate and unbiassed in-

vestigation of the contents of the religious consciousness reveals the fact that a number of the primary instincts have played their part in the psychological origin and development of religion. We may note the following:

1. The Instinct of Fear. It cannot be denied that fear, which is the emotional accompaniment of the impulse to self-preservation, lay at the roots of the earliest expressions of the religious consciousness. Primitive man (as we have pointed out in Chapter IV.) found himself in the presence of a mysterious force which overwhelmed him by a sense of its nearness, its potency, and its mystery. Wherever he went he felt that nature was pervaded with this indefinable something which was not only diffused throughout the whole of his environment, but was also capable of being concentrated in striking objects and unusual occurrences. It is natural that man should feel afraid in the presence of this uncanny force, and that he should try to come to terms with it. He believed that it surrounded his life, and that it had an intimate bearing upon his existence at every point. At any moment it might break out upon him and destroy all that he held dear, even life itself. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that his emotional reaction to the universe should be one of

fear. Moreover, in the animistic stage the imagination of primitive man peopled the world of nature with myriads of living spirits, the majority of whom were by no means friendly disposed towards him. Every rock and tree and river, etc., was indwelt by some spirit which might do him harm, so that he was always more or less afraid of the objects of the external world. Hence many of these things were worshipped, the alleged spirits afterwards developing into tribal gods.

2. The Instinct of Curiosity. Man possesses the innate tendency to be curious in the presence of the mysterious and unusual, the emotional accompaniment being the emotion of wonder. And there was much in the environment of primitive man to stimulate this impulse. He found himself in a world that was full of mystery, full of many things that he could not understand. On every hand, he could see objects that he could not explain and which therefore provoked his curiosity. Above all, there was the mysterious mana, the uncanny power which he "sensed" everywhere, and which stimulated his wonder as well as his fear.

3. The Instinct of Self-Abasement. Man has also the innate tendency to be submissive in the presence of that which he regards as superior to himself in knowledge or power,

the emotional accompaniment being the feeling of inferiority, of devotion, of humility (or, as Dr. McDougall calls it, "negative self-feeling"). This tendency too was evoked by the environment of primitive man. Wherever he went he found himself in the presence of a power which he regarded as being immensely his superior. It could do things which were impossible to man; and when man himself possessed this power he too could achieve things that were previously beyond his ability. Consequently, in the presence of this mysterious force primitive man "bowed himself down to the earth and worshipped." In humility, as well as in fear and wonder, he covered himself with "dust and ashes."

4. The Parental Instinct. This innate tendency, which determines the parent to take care of its young, is widespread throughout the animal world and finds its highest expression in man. Its manifestations are very varied in character, but its feeling aspect, known as tender emotion, in all probability is qualitatively the same wherever the instinct is found. This tendency occupies a somewhat unique position among the instincts, inasmuch as it is the only one which directly seeks the good, not of the individual, but of those who are the objects to which the impulse is directed.

It is therefore said to be altruistic in character, and not egoistic as in the case of the others. Hence, it is often maintained—and with a good show of reason—that the Parental Instinct, with its tender emotion, is the root of all altruistic conduct, the source of law and morality. The practical expression of this instinct is very complex, and in all its ramifications cannot, of course, enter into religion. But inasmuch as it prompts the individual to seek and maintain contact with its object, and to endeavour to serve and cherish that object, it played its part even in the early manifestations of the religious consciousness. For it seems quite certain that religion could not have originated *solely* in the impulse to flee from its object, *i.e.,* in the instinct of fear. Primitive man was not merely afraid of the higher order of existence; he was also drawn towards it. We admit that the primary manifestation of the religious consciousness was "a sense of awe in the presence of a diffused, indefinable, mysterious power" but, as Dr. Marett says, "awe is not the same thing as 'pure funk.'" We can subscribe to the doctrine that "fear made the gods" only if we admit admiration, awe and wonder to be, no less than fear, essential constituents of the first expressions of the religious consciousness. For these, as Dr.

McDougall points out, are the emotions which play the principal part in the religious life. Admiration is a fusion of wonder and negative self-feeling (the instincts of curiosity and self-abasement); awe is a fusion of admiration and fear (the instincts of curiosity, self-abasement, and self-preservation); reverence is awe blended with the tender emotion (the instincts of curiosity, self-abasement, self-preservation, and the parental instinct). All these—and not merely any one of them—are the innate tendencies which lie at the base of the religious life.

There is, however, one other instinct which needs to be mentioned because its consideration will help us to understand the psychological basis of religion from the point of view of the life-force (referred to earlier in this chapter). This is what Prof. W. P. Paterson, in his book *The Nature of Religion,* calls the Instinct of Self-Affirmation. By this is meant, not what Dr. McDougall calls the instinct of Self-Assertion or Self-Display, which is simply the tendency of the individual to assert or display himself, but the innate tendency, which every organism possesses, to maintain itself at all costs. From one point of view this may be regarded as the positive side of the instinct of self-preservation; from

another, it may be regarded as the fundamental life-force operating through all the instinctive impulses. If we regard it in the latter light we can think of it as *the* psychological root of religion. We shall see that this is so if we ask the question: Why did primitive man adopt a religious adjustment to the universe? Why did he seek to enter into relations with the higher order of existence? Obviously, because he felt that he could utilise the power or powers above him in his own struggle to maintain himself. He believed that in the mysterious mana he possessed a reservoir of energy which he could draw upon for his purposes. "The struggle for bare existence must have been so severe for primitive man that any reinforcement of power which promised to supplement his own meagre resource and skill would be eagerly welcomed and made use of, and such reinforcement he found in the supernormal agencies which he felt were at work around him, and which he sought by petition and propitiation to enlist on his side in the fight for existence." (Prof. D. Miall Edwards.) Thus we see again that religion is natural to man, having its roots deep down in the horme or life-force. It is an expression of the "will to live"; more, it is essentially a quest for fulness of life. And it is because religion, not only aids man in

the struggle for existence, but also helps him to achieve a higher kind of life, that it came into being and remains an integral part of human personality.

Is it objected that the view outlined above ascribes religion to a very lowly origin, that it finds the roots of the religious consciousness in what some people are pleased to term "degraded primitive instincts" which belong to our "animal past"? The answer is ready to hand. For one thing, it is wrong to speak of the instincts as "degraded" unless we make them so by debasing them to selfish, ignoble and unworthy ends. The instincts, as we have already said, are the raw material of character. In themselves they are neither good nor bad, neither moral nor immoral—it is the use we make of them which determines their ethical quality. And, indeed, it is the very purpose of religion on its practical side that the instincts should function in ways that are ethically right and should be consecrated to the highest ends. For another thing, we have learned that the value of a thing is not dependent upon its origin. Everything has to be judged, not by its first stages, but by its last and highest. It is no argument against the beauty of the rose that its roots are deep down in manure. We do not despise the loveliness of the lily because it is nourished and sustained by

what it receives from the mud and slime of the pond. We do not reject the beneficent works of modern chemistry because it originated in the superstitious alchemy of the ancients. Why then should we suspect the reality and validity of religion because it has sprung from what appear to be very lowly beginnings?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. "Religion is an activity of the whole of man's nature." Discuss this statement.
2. Define "Instinct." How does it differ from "Intelligence"?
3. "Fear made the gods as well as our duties." How far, do you think, is this true?
4. What are the principal Instincts which enter into the psychological origin and development of Religion?
5. Is the validity of Religion in any way impaired by its having had an apparently lowly origin?
6. In what way is Religion an expression of "the will to live"?

CHAPTER VI.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN RELIGION.

THE two previous chapters were concerned with the psychological origin and basis of religion. We found that the earliest manifestations of the religious consciousness consisted in an overwhelming sense of awe in the presence of the mystery of the universe; and we found further that this reaction to the mystery of the universe involved the whole of man's personality as thought, feeling and will, and that in its essence it was a reaction of a complexity of instinctive tendencies, through which the fundamental horme or life-force expressed itself. We have now to consider some—and only some—of the psychological factors which help to shape and determine the religious experiences of the individual. What is to be said about these factors may be conveniently summed up under the following headings.

1. The Organisation of the Emotions. Psychologists often point out (what the ordinary observer can see for himself) that the child's emotional reaction to his environment consists of sporadic feelings which

follow one another oft-times with startling rapidity. The child is at the mercy of the passing moment; he experiences each emotion as it rises in the presence of its appropriate object, "giving himself up to anger or fear or laughter or wonder in turn, scarcely tempered by past experiences or by possible results." In the case of the normal adult, however, it is different. The adult of developed character, unlike the child, is not a creature of mere feeling-impulse and caprice. As the life developes the primitive emotions of the child are gradually organised into large systems of emotional response; and to these systems—a knowledge of which is so necessary for the understanding of human character—the name Sentiments has been given. A sentiment, it must be remembered, is not the same as an emotion, though it involves emotions. It is, as Prof. McDougall says, "a system of emotional tendencies organised around the idea of an object." An emotion, on the other hand, is the feeling-aspect of an instinctive activity. An emotion exists only while it is being experienced; a sentiment exists as an element of character even when it is not manifesting itself in immediate experience. A concrete example or two will make the distinction between emotion and sentiment

quite clear. A mother loves her child with a love that increases with the years—that love is a sentiment, not an emotion. But because she has that sentiment of love for the child, the mother tends to experience certain emotions according to the situation in which she perceives the object of her love to be. Thus she will experience fear when the child is in danger, anger when the child is " put upon " by anyone, sorrow when the child fails in any way, joy when the child achieves something worth while, and so on. Love is therefore a sentiment, *i.e.,* an acquired psycho-physical disposition, consisting of a number of feeling-tendencies which have become " organised around the idea of an object." Again, patriotism is a sentiment. The man who truly loves his country will feel for his country in a manner determined by the situation in which he perceives the object of his patriotic disposition to be. Thus if his country is in danger he will fear for its safety, if the sun of prosperity shines upon it he will rejoice in its good fortune, if it is aggressively attacked by some foreign foe he will, with righteous indignation burning in his breast, seek to defend it. Patriotism is love of one's own country, and is therefore a sentiment, " a system of emotional tendencies organised around the idea of an object."

Now the essence of a sentiment is this "idea of an object," for without this nucleus or centre around which the emotional tendencies can be organised a sentiment could not arise. And because this is so, the quality of the sentiment is determined by the adequacy and richness of the "idea of the object," which forms its centre. There can, for example, be a false patriotism due to the fact that the man entertains a very inadequate idea of his country and of its true welfare and destiny. Moreover, a man can organise his emotional tendencies around wrong objects, as in the case of the miser whose love of money is his dominant passion. And indeed, the case of the miser illustrates another fact in this connection, viz., that men form what are called "master-sentiments" which have the power to dominate, and even destroy, lesser sentiments. Most people—perhaps *all* people—in the course of a life-time form one "master-sentiment" which gives the key to the understanding of their personality. Character crystallises around that which a man chooses as his supreme interest in life. The miser is the man who has allowed his love of money to dominate and control him; the "bohemian" is the man whose character has crystallised around his love of pleasure; the saint is he whose supreme interest,

shaping and determining the whole of his thinking and living, is God.

What is the bearing of all this upon religion? The answer may be given in the words of Prof. Thouless, who says: "On its mental side, religion is clearly a sentiment; it is a system of emotional dispositions organising in its system a variety of emotions," and the characteristic emotion which is organised in the religious sentiment "is the highly complex one called reverence." In the case of the truly religious man this religious sentiment predominates; indeed, true religion consists psychologically in the formation of a "master-sentiment" the centre and organising principle of which is the idea of God. To form such a "master-sentiment" may be said to be the great task, from the psychological standpoint, of the religious life, and no man can be religious in the fullest and deepest sense of the term until he has completed this task. In Christian theology, this requirement is expressed in the doctrine of "complete surrender" and, from another point of view, in the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ. In Christian experience, the formation of the religious "master-sentiment" is admirably exemplified in the lives of the Christian mystics. In philosophy, the nearest approach to it is to

be found in the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and in Spinoza's conception of "the intellectual love of God." For the ordinary Christian, the beginning of any serious attempt to form this "master-sentiment" is made in Conversion which, from this point of view, has been well defined as "a transference from a self-centred to a God-centred life." Moreover, the value of what are called by Evangelical Christians "the means of grace" lies in the fact that they are means to this end—the creation and development of a strong religious sentiment. Prayer, meditation, the devotional reading of the Scriptures, the participation in public worship, are all of supreme importance to the Christian believer because they help forward the organisation and systematisation of his emotional impulses around the idea of God.

It must be remembered, however, that the value of the religious sentiment depends upon the adequacy and richness of the idea of God which forms its core. An inadequate idea of God spells an impoverished religious life. If the Object of the "soul's quest" is vaguely or wrongly conceived the seeking soul will be spiritually the poorer as a result. As a recent writer, Dr. Thomas Phillips, vividly puts it: "The failures of the past have resulted from thinking unworthily of God. When we have made Him material,

life has been grovelling and low; when we have thought of Him as sensual, life has been unwholesome and base, and when we have thrust Him into the dim distance and represented Him as remote and aloof, life has been uncertain and the world bewildering and bare. An arbitrary God has made us capricious; an austere God has made us intolerant, and a poorly conceived God has turned us into little men." It is because Christianity alone gives to us an adequate idea of God that it rises superior to every other faith of mankind. Central to the Gospel is our Lord's conception of God as the Holy Father Who, as Augustine says in the oft-quoted line, "loves everyone of us as if there were but one of us to love." This is the only worthy conception of the Supreme Being; and if the religious sentiment which the individual gradually develops is to be fully adequate to the soul's fundamental needs, its centre must be the idea of the "higher order of existence" as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The Transformation of the Instincts. It has already been pointed out that man, in common with the lower animals with whom he is physically and psychically akin, is richly endowed at birth with a number of innate tendencies called instincts, and that these instincts constitute the raw material

out of which character is subsequently formed. It must be remembered, however, that man—as Aristotle asserted long ago—is a social animal who lives a completely human life only in the society of his fellows, and that some of the instincts with which he is endowed tend, in their original form, to express themselves in ways which are subversive of social life. The upshot of these two facts is that the developing individual is faced with the alternatives either of eradicating these innate tendencies altogether or of transforming them into higher kinds of activity. That these instincts cannot be successfully eradicated is the almost unanimous testimony of modern Social Psychology. It is true that they may be repressed for a while, that they may be denied expression by being driven underground into the "unconscious." But they are not destroyed thereby. They are merely rendered temporarily quiescent and are bound, sooner or later, to lead to irrational and hurtful behaviour. Hence if these tendencies are to be dealt with in a satisfactory way, it will only be by deflecting them into channels which are socially and morally useful. As an illustration of this fact we may instance the pugnacious instinct. Man, as is obvious to everyone, possesses the instinct to fight, and this

instinct has been operative all down through the history of the race. But if the tendency had always expressed itself along primitive biological channels, *i.e.,* if men had always simply fought one another without in any way transforming the instinct, the race would have been completely exterminated long ago. In the course of centuries, however, the individual quarrelsomeness of primitive man has undergone a certain amount of deflection. Instead of fighting the members of his own tribe, primitive man was gradually disciplined so that he came to regard it as right to fight only the members of neighbouring and hostile tribes. In modern life, the instinct has, in many people, been deflected from its natural object, viz., a human enemy, and is directed to the overcoming the forces of nature (as in the case of the scientist) or to conquering the " hosts of evil " (as in the case of the social and moral reformer). Another obvious illustration of transformation is seen in the case of the sex instinct. This is one of the strongest innate tendencies with which man is endowed. The energy at the disposal of this instinct seems to be enormous. " The position of man with his animal ancestry and his civilised life is that of a being charged with superfluous energy. Unless this energy can be utilised for social pur-

poses it will break up ordered social life." That this energy can be so utilised is now generally recognised by psychologists. One of the most characteristic doctrines of modern Social Psychology is that the sex instinct can be, and indeed has been, transformed into socially useful channels and is one of the psychological sources of man's greatest achievements in art, science and literature.

What is the bearing of this problem of the transformation of instincts upon religion? In answer to this question two things may be said briefly. The first is this. The religious life involves a certain amount of transformation of the primitive endowments. That this was the case with primitive man is obvious when we remember that to him religion was an affair of the tribe, in other words, that it was a social concern. Hence for him to be religious meant that he had to discipline his innate propensities for the sake of the common good. As he became more religious he became more socialised, and he could become more socialised only as he deflected his instincts into channels that were recognised as conducing to the welfare of the tribe. We may see this question of transformation more clearly, however, when we consider religion in its highest expression, *i.e.*, in

Christian experience. Christianity insists upon the necessity of the radical transformation of human nature. It proclaims the doctrine of the "New Birth" and can have no fellowship with the view that "human nature does not change." It urges that by the grace of God manifested and bestowed in Jesus Christ even the "prime movers" (*i.e.*, the instincts) of human activity can be consecrated to the noblest purposes and redirected to the highest ends. This naturally leads to the second thing, which is this. True religion aids man in the great task of transforming or "sublimating" the innate tendencies of his nature. This deflection of the instincts cannot usually take place unless the individual passes through a period of conflict and tension, as anyone may see for himself by an appeal to his own experience. Despite the pressure which comes from his social environment, and despite the aid given to him by the processes of moral education, the average individual finds it no easy task to get rid of his "animal past" and to redirect the energy of his instincts into the highest channels. To develop his personality to its highest reaches, to enfold the richest possibilities of character—and that is the essential problem of life—man needs a force which does not originate in human nature, though it operates through

human nature. To "climb the steep ascent of heaven," he requires a moral dynamic that is more than adequate to all his spiritual needs. To come through his moral conflicts "more than conqueror," the strength of his innate propensities must be "harnessed to the chariots of God."

3. The Unification of Character. We have referred in the last paragraph to the experience of conflict. In some form or another this is a characteristic of all personal life, and arises from the fact that the individual lives in a social and moral environment which imposes upon him the difficult task of deflecting some of his innate propensities. The instincts in some of their manifestations are (as we have pointed out above) incompatible with standards of conduct which the individual has come to regard as right and socially desirable. Hence, the attempt to turn the energy of these instincts into channels which are morally and socially praiseworthy gives rise to the experience of conflict. Often this experience of conflict consists very largely in nothing more emphatic than a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with the present status of the self, together with a morbid fear as to what the future may bring. Sometimes the experience is so severe as to produce mental instability and disease, through the creation

and activity in the "unconscious" of what are known, in the language of the New Psychology, as "buried complexes." But whether the mind is diseased or not, this experience of conflict afflicts the self with moral impotence. The individual has to confess with the Apostle Paul: "The good that I would do, I do not; the evil which I would not do, that I do . . . when I would do good, evil is present with me." This means that there has been a disruption of personality. The character is pervaded with a more or less marked sense of unrest, imperfection and disharmony. It is a case of "a house divided against itself," with disastrous and disconcerting consequences. In the New Testament we get a striking example of this experience in Romans ch. vii. from which we have just quoted. In literature the most famous instance is to be found in Robert Louis Stevenson's weird story of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." And the researches of modern psychologists, like Dr. Morton Prince and others, have discovered many cases of "dual" and even "multiple" personality, in which the experience of conflict appears in a marked pathological, *i.e.*, diseased, form.

How is such a condition of things to be changed? How is the divided character to be unified and the disrupted personality

healed? To answer this question we must briefly consider a psychological phenomenon which has received considerable attention from religious psychologists, viz., Conversion. And we may let the religious psychologists speak for themselves on this matter. "Conversion," says Prof. William James, "is that process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities." The testimony of Prof. J. B. Pratt is similar. "The essential thing about conversion," he urges, "is just the unification of character, the achievement of a new self. The process may have many by-products of an emotional nature, it may express itself in varying intellectual forms, it may be gradual or seemingly sudden, but the really important and only essential part of it is just this new birth by which a man ceases to be a mere psychological thing or a divided self, and becomes a unified being with a definite direction under the guidance of a group of consistent and harmonious purposes or ideals."

That this is so is best seen from the records of Christian conversion with which Christian history and literature abound (though conversion as a psycho-

logical phenomenon is not confined to Christianity). Innumerable cases could be quoted of men and women whose characters were unified, whose divided personalities were healed, when they passed through the experience of conversion. Many of these conversions are of the sudden and violent type, and as such have made a great impression upon the minds of ordinary folk. It must be remembered, however, that though the violence of these cases is real enough, the suddenness is more apparent than real. At any rate, modern psychology has taught us to see that when the divided self is unified by the experience of conversion, the experience itself, however sudden it may appear to be, has its roots deep down in the "unconscious" where previous experiences are at work gradually preparing for the spiritual crisis which manifests itself in "the soul's awakening." The conversion of the Apostle Paul, for example, was only apparently sudden (though it was decidedly dramatic) as we can see when we remember the part that he took in the trial and death of Stephen the first Christian martyr. As he went along the road to Damascus, psychological forces were at work in his unconscious mind, and at the appropriate moment these entered, in a dramatic fashion, into the centre of con-

sciousness, and he "passed from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It is not implied, of course, that this is the whole explanation of what took place. In speaking thus we are thinking of conversion simply as a psychological phenomenon, and not at all as a "miracle of grace." From the latter point of view, it is not sufficient to say that conversion is due to the emergence of unconscious influences into the focus of consciousness. As Dr. Selbie says: "When all that has been said the question why, and why at that particular time, still remains. The more closely the matter is investigated the more clearly are we justified in declaring from the religious point of view that the direct action of the Spirit of God is here not excluded. All that we claim is that such action will take place through the normal operation of mental and psychical processes."

What is said above about Conversion, as an aspect of religious experience, may be said in its essence about genuine religion itself. Modern Religious Psychology makes it impossible for us to deny that religion has its roots in the psychological nature of man, that the religious consciousness develops according to psychological laws, and that psychological factors enter into and determine the unfolding of religious experience.

Yet even when we have taken full cognisance of all this, there remains a unique factor which cannot be explained simply by recourse to psychological factors and laws. When the Psychologist of Religion has done all that he possibly can do in the way of the classification, clarification and description of the material at his disposal, there is left over and above an " unexplained residue " which is the very heart of the religious life. And that " unexplained residue " is nothing less than the grace and truth of God at work in the human soul, calling it to Himself, transforming it into His own image, and redeeming it into a life of enriching fellowship with Him Who is " God over all, blessed for evermore.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Explain, and illustrate, what is meant by a "Sentiment."

2. "The formation of the 'religious sentiment' may be said to be the great task, from the psychological standpoint, of the religious life." Discuss this.

3. Should every Instinct always be allowed to express itself naturally? If not, how should it be dealt with?

4. What bearing has Religion upon the problem of the transformation of the Instincts?

5. Explain the psychological condition known as "Conflict," illustrating both from the Bible and from literature.

6. Read Acts ix. 1-22. Indicate the psychological elements involved in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and consider how far that experience may be described as sudden.

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